

HEALTHY CHILDREN, HEALTHY WEIGHTS BRINGS THE PARTY

By Rachel Montalbano and Hannah Bills

Small World Child Care center director Elizabeth Garren warmly greeted me as I entered her center to talk about her experience with the Healthy Children, Healthy Weights program. Ms. Garren was quick to complement various aspects of this childhood obesity prevention program and comment on its impact for her center.

She shared her appreciation for the Dietitians that trained the teachers and administrators, who always came to them and were so entertaining. Ms. Garren was blown away at how helpful they were and how enjoyable they made the process.

Ms. Garren said the biggest impact she has seen on the health of her children is the policy on Healthy Celebrations. Before the Healthy Children, Healthy Weights program, parents would bring in all different sodas, pizza, and cake for their child's birthday. Now, they have healthy luncheons with the children. As a result of this Healthy Celebrations policy, she has also found that the children absolutely love chewing on fresh-frozen fruit, especially apple slices. Ms. Garren said, "Kids who hate apples were asking me for seconds of the frozen apple slices!"

In addition, when children bring in any outside food for breakfast that doesn't meet new center standards, Ms. Garren will now ask the parent or child to give her the food. She then provides them with a healthy food for breakfast and will return the child's food from home after the school day.

Now, kids plan to eat a healthy breakfast at the center. Their parents think of healthy alternatives of birthday party food and make them fun to eat.